

State Senator • Deb Cherry 02/03 news

For The Constituents of the 26th District

State Faces Tight Budget

Michigan faces a very serious budget shortfall this year. The 2002-2003 state budget is out of balance by \$150 million. The School Aid Budget is short \$127 million more. State budget analysts also predict shortfalls in next year's budget and school aid fund as well.

Our current budget problems did not happen quickly. They built over time as state revenues decreased as a result of both a national recession and changes to Michigan's tax structure. The actions taken in the past to solve budget problems were, unfortunately, not enough to prevent our current situation.

My colleagues and I must now work together to find a budget solution that minimizes as much as possible any negative effects on Michigan families and the state services

they rely upon. If we take careful action now, then hopefully we can avoid greater budget shortfalls in the future.

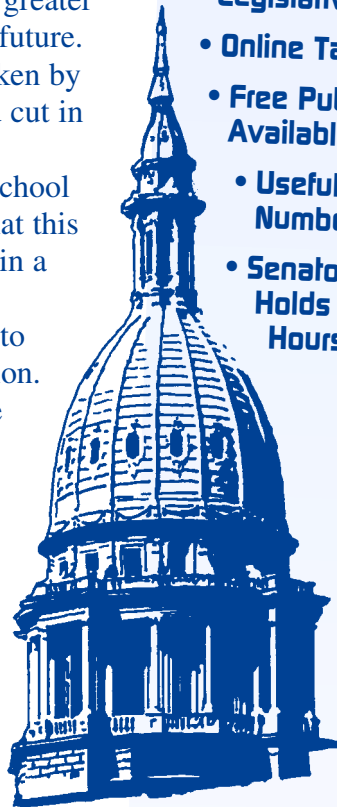
The first action taken by the governor, a prorated cut in education funding, was mandated by law. The school aid fund law requires that this kind of action be taken in a budget crisis.

None of us wants to see more cuts to education. None of us wants to see agencies entrusted with protecting our children and senior citizens struggle to provide necessary services and programs. However, to strengthen the state's finances, we must deal with limitations to state services. Difficult decisions must be made to make our state fiscally strong.



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Cherry Senate Office Open For Business

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to my Senate staff and encourage you to contact us with your questions and thoughts about the issues facing our state.

You can reach me by mail, by telephone, and via Internet e-mail. My Lansing Senate office is Room 910 in the Farnum Building on the corner of Capitol Avenue and Allegan Street, near the State Capitol. I can be reached in Lansing by phone at my toll-free number: 866-305-2126.

My other Lansing office phone number is 517-373-1636. My fax number is 517-373-1453.

You can also reach me by e-mail. My e-mail address is SenDCherry@senate.michigan.gov.

My office staff members are also ready and willing to offer you their assistance. Paula Anderson is responsible for my schedule and constituent work. She keeps track of my meetings and activities here in Lansing, as well as meetings and events

that I will attend in the 26th Senate District. If you would like me to attend your event or if you would like to meet with me, Paula is the person to call.

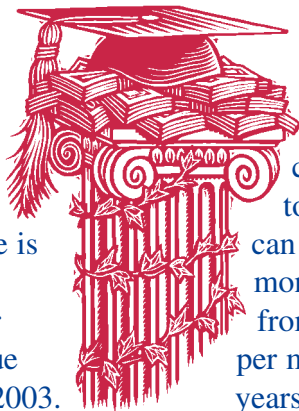
Mike Glasson is responsible for constituent work and district events. If you have a question about state services that you receive or think you should receive, if you have a question about state department procedures, or you need help cutting through the state bureaucracy, then Mike can help you.

continued on page 2

State Programs Help You Save For College

Michigan offers a number of different ways to help parents and students save for a college education. One of the earliest programs was the Michigan Education Trust (MET). The latest higher education savings option is known as the Michigan Education Savings Program (MESP).

MET offers families an opportunity to pre-pay their child's college tuition. There is currently an open enrollment period for MET that will continue through August 30, 2003. There are three kinds of MET contracts: Full Benefits, Limited Benefits, and Community College. A one-year Full Benefits contract now costs \$6,063. To cover four years in college, a person would have to buy a four-year MET contract. At this current price, that would



cost a person \$24,242. A Limited Benefits contract now costs \$4,884 per year. The cost of a one-year Community College contract is \$1,730. MET contracts only cover the cost of tuition.

MET contracts can be used at any Michigan college or university. MET contract purchasers also qualify for a state income tax deduction, and earnings on contributions are tax exempt to beneficiaries. Contracts can be purchased through monthly payments that range from \$21 per month to \$592 per month. Students have nine years in which to use a MET contract.

The Michigan Education Savings Program (MESP) allows parents to establish a savings account for their child's education. Money saved in this kind of an account can be used at any college or university in Michigan or any other state. The money

can be used for any college expense including tuition, books, equipment and supplies, and certain room and board expenses.

Contributions to an MESP account can be deducted from state income taxes. Joint filers can deduct up to \$10,000 per year, and single filers can deduct up to \$5,000 per year. Anyone—parents, relatives, or friends—can open an MESP account and make contributions for a student. MESP offers three investment choices for a contributor: the Age-Based Managed Allocation Option, a Guaranteed Option, and the 100% Equity Option. Savings in an MESP account are limited to a total account balance of \$235,000 that applies to all accounts open for a beneficiary.

More information on MET and MESP can be found on the Michigan Department of Treasury website at www.michigan.gov/treasury.

Hunter Safety Program Announced

I am proud to sponsor my Seventh Annual Hunter Safety Program in the spring. People of all ages are encouraged to attend this free program. The class consists of two days of instruction in a classroom and ends with a day at a range,

followed by a graduation ceremony. The instructors are certified by the Department of Natural Resources. Classroom days, held at the Grand Blanc High School, are April 28, from 6-9 pm, and April 30, from 6-9 pm. Our range day and

graduation ceremony will be Saturday, May 3. All participants will receive a certificate of completion. Please call my office at (866) 305-2126 to reserve a spot; space is limited. This event is co-sponsored by the Flint Area Building Trades.

Cherry Senate Office Open For Business *continued from page 1*

Mike will assist me at events in the many communities that I now represent. He will also organize events so that I can travel through the 26th District to meet and talk with people.

Denise Flannery is responsible for constituent work and legislation. If you have questions about legislation that I have introduced or other bills that are under consideration in the Legislature, then Denise is the person to contact. She will also assist me in writing legislation that best meets our needs in Michigan and in my district. If you have ideas for new laws, Denise and I would be happy to hear them.



Senator Cherry being sworn in. Standing next to her is her mother, Marge Cherry, and her brother, Lieutenant Governor John Cherry.

Visit Sen. Cherry's Website

www.senate.michigan.gov/dem/sd26

My State Senate website is up and running. This site will keep you up to date on my activities both in Lansing and in the district. You can read the press releases I have issued as well as newsletters that I will also mail into the district.

The publications button takes you to a list of state booklets and pamphlets that I am happy to provide to you free of charge. These are useful books that can answer many questions you might have about such issues as planning for health care after retirement, saving for your child's education, and writing your own will. There are also a number of Michigan history booklets that can be very useful in the classroom as well as just being interesting to read. For younger students, the state offers a Michigan coloring book as well as a child safety coloring book. Please take advantage of this service and order any books that you might like. For your convenience, I have also printed a list of these

booklets in this newsletter (page 4).

My website also gives you access to other state websites. From my page, you can access the Senate Democratic website, the Michigan Legislature website, the Governor's Office website, and all state departments. I have also included links to useful Genesee and Oakland County websites, Lansing area links, and a list of websites that may be of particular interest to educators. I will continue to regularly update the links page and periodically feature new links to other interesting and useful websites.

One fun feature on my website is the photos and visitors button. Many of our area schools bring students to Lansing for a Capitol tour. If a school group visits during session, I am happy to have a photo taken with the

students outside the Senate Chamber. These photos are then posted on my website. I am always happy to welcome visitors to my office, and it is also possible to have photos taken then as well. Please visit my website often. The Internet is the best way to stay informed about what is happening in Lansing at the State Capitol.



Useful 800 Numbers

Listed below are toll-free numbers for state government agencies and other informational resources. Clip this panel and keep it next to your telephone.

- Auto Consumer Complaints (Secretary of State) - 800-292-4204
- Civil Rights Issues (Department of Civil Rights) - 800-368-1019
- "Dining Smoke Free In Michigan" Guide - 800-537-5666
- Telephone/Gas/Electric Company Complaints (Public Service Commission) - 800-292-9555
- Elder Prescription Insurance Coverage - 866-747-5844
- Fatalities in the Workplace (Consumer and Industry Services) - 800-858-0397
- Financial Aid Info (Treasury) - 877-FA-FACTS
- Health Facility Complaints (CIS) - 800-882-6006
- Health and Toxic Waste Hotline - 800-648-6942
- Healthy Kids (Children's Medicaid) - 888-988-6300
- Home Heating Assistance Hotline - 800-292-5650
- Hospital Complaints (CIS) - 800-882-6006
- Income Tax Info (Treasury) - 800-487-7000
- Insurance Questions (CIS) - 800-777-8005

- Legal Hotline for MI Seniors - 800-347-5297
- Long Term Care Ombudsman - 800-485-9393
- Medicaid Case Hotline (FIA) - 800-642-3195
- Medicaid Managed Care Waiver - 800-642-3195
- MI Child Enrollment - 888-988-6300
- MI Education Savings Program - 800-877-861-MESP
- MI Education Trust (Treasury) - 800-MET-4-KID
- MI Merit Award Program - 888-95-MERIT
- MI Problem Gambling Hotline - 800-270-7117
- MIOSHA (CIS) - 800-866-4674
- Motor Fuel Quality Complaints - 800-632-3835
- Nursing Home Complaints (CIS) - 800-882-6006
- Oakland County Area on Aging - 800-852-7795
- Oil and Chemical Spills (DEQ) - 800-424-8802
- Phone Solicitation Complaints (AG) - 800-769-4515
- Pollution Emergency Alerting - 800-292-4706
- Smokers Free Quit Kit - 800-537-5666
- State Park Reservations - 800-44-PARKS
- Unemployment - MI Employers (Unemployment Agency) - 800-638-3994
- Unemployment - MI Employees (Unemployment Agency) - 800-638-3995
- Weatherization Assistance - 866-496-0002
- Welfare Fraud Hotline (FIA) - 800-222-8558



State Senator
Deb Cherry

P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536



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Senator Cherry Holds Coffee Hours

Please stop by to share a concern, ask a question, or just have a cup of coffee and chat. Coffee hours are from 7:30 am - 9:00 am at the following locations:

March 10, 2003
Country Jim's Family Restaurant
4743 Dixie Hwy. • Waterford

March 24, 2003
Big Boy
4447 Vienna Rd. • Clio

Check my website frequently to keep updated on future coffee hours.



FREE Publications Available

Please check the appropriate box(es) below, fill in your name and address in the space provided, and return this entire coupon to: **State Senator Deb Cherry, P. O. Box 30036, Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536.**

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changes and Choices, Legal Rights of Senior Adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Movin' On: A Handbook for Young People
<i>A guide for teens graduating from high school.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug and Alcohol Abuse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Safety Coloring Book | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning for Your Peace of Mind
<i>Information about making a will or organ donations, and how to create a Durable Power of Attorney.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Recycling: A Coloring and Learning Book |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Michigan Constitution | <input type="checkbox"/> A Practical Guide for Tenants and Landlords | <input type="checkbox"/> Michigan Taxpayer's Guide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Constitutional Rights, Crime Victim's Rights Act, and Crime Prevention | <input type="checkbox"/> Portraits of Michigan
<i>Pictures and artwork about our State.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Michigan Guide to Business Information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Protection Resource Guide | <input type="checkbox"/> Services for Seniors | <input type="checkbox"/> The Michigan Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence, Stalking, Date Rape ... An Information Guide | <input type="checkbox"/> Veterans Benefits and Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Michigan's Natural Resources and Environment: A Citizens' Guide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> For the People, By the People
<i>How the legislative, executive and judicial branches of state government work.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Your Child - A Parent's Guide to Health and Safety
<i>Selecting a day care provider, immunization chart, information on choosing a car seat, tax credits and how to report child abuse are also included.</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Michigan Travel Map |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Michigan's Friend of the Court | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting to Know Michigan
<i>A coloring book for kids in grades 2 to 4.</i> | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Legislative Process in Michigan - A Student's Guide
<i>Written for high school students and adults.</i> | | |

(Please Print)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____, MI Zip Code _____ Phone () _____

